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FIFTH ANNUAL REPORT OF THE SECRETARY OF THE BOARD OF
EDUCATION.

TO THE BOARD OF EDUCATION :

GENTLEMEN, — At the close of another year, I present to the Board my Fifth Annual Report.

The promises referred to in my last Report, of a growing interest in our Common Schools, and of their corresponding prosperity, have been fully redeemed.

In so extensive an enterprise as that of perfecting a system of means for the universal education of a people, striking results cannot be expected in a single year. Much light must be diffused, many erroneous opinions must be rectified, many prejudices allayed, before all classes of men, working freely and voluntarily, will work harmoniously for a common end. Circumstances, too, that are untoward, may retard for a season, the advancement which they cannot overcome. Sufficient time, however, has now elapsed since the adoption, by the State, of the present plan for the extension of educational means, to enable us, like a voyager who is doubtful of his course, to take an observation, and thence to discover whether we are making progress towards the destined point.

It is now four years since I prepared the Abstract of the School Returns for 1837, and made my First Annual Report to the Board.

Since that time, the amount of appropriations made by the towns, for the wages and board of the teachers, and fuel for the schools, has increased more than one hundred thousand dollars.

During the same time, the schools have been lengthened, on an average, almost three weeks each, which, for three thousand one hundred and three, (the number of public schools kept last year in the State,) amounts, in the whole, to more than one hundred and seventy-five years.

The average wages of male teachers, for the same period, have advanced thirty-three per cent. ; those of females, a little more than twelve and a half per cent. I am satisfied that the value of the services of both sexes has increased in a much greater ratio than that of their compensation.

There were one hundred and eighty-five more public schools last year, than in 1837, which is rather less than the ratio of increase in the number of children between the ages of four and sixteen years. This favorable result is owing to the union of small districts. The number of male teachers has increased one hundred and twenty-one ;

that of females, five hundred and twenty-one, which shows the growing and most beneficial practice of employing female teachers for small schools, and female assistants in large ones.

Many towns in the State, during the last year, completed the renovation of all the schoolhouses within their respective limits.

From a perusal of the school committees' reports for the last year, it appears that the number of schools broken up by the insubordination of the scholars, was not more than one tenth part what it was for the preceding year. This gain to the honor of the schools,—or rather this exemption from disgrace,—is to be attributed to the combined causes of better modes of government by the teachers, more faithful supervision by the committees, a more extended personal acquaintance on the part of parents, and especially to the practice of making a report to the towns of the condition of the schools, and the conduct of the scholars. Few boys between the ages of fifteen and twenty-one years, are so depraved and shameless as not to recoil at the idea of being reported for misconduct, in open town-meeting, and of having an attested record of their disgrace transmitted to the seat of government, with the chance, should they persist in their incorrigibleness for two or three years, of finding themselves historically known to other countries and times, through the medium of the School Abstracts. The cases of schools brought to a violent termination, during the last year, by the insubordination of the scholars, happened, almost invariably, in those towns, and sections of counties, in the State, where I have found the least sympathy and coöperation in my labors.

The interior condition of the schools, as to order, thoroughness, progress, manners, and so forth, not being susceptible of tabular statement, or statistical exhibition, must be inferred from these outward and palpable evidences of their advancement.

These are some of the results, at which the co-workers in the noble cause of education may congratulate themselves,—results which will furnish, at once, the richest reward for past efforts, and the highest incentive to future exertions.

My official duties, during the past year, have been substantially the same in kind, as those detailed in former Reports; but the increased interest which the Massachusetts school system has excited in other States, has imposed upon me the labor of a more extensive correspondence.

PROPOSED SUBSTITUTE FOR COUNTY CONVENTIONS.

The County Common School Conventions have generally been much better attended than during the preceding year. These annual county meetings, which have now been held for five successive years in the counties of the State, have been eminently useful in diffusing information, as to a better system of school district organization, better modes of instruction, and so forth. Especially, by bringing the sympathy of numbers to bear upon individuals, they have diffused a spirit, and created an energy, more worthy of a cause which carries so much of the happiness of the community in its bosom. But it seems to me that the mode of operation heretofore pursued, may now be modified with evident advantage.

To explain my views in regard to the most eligible course for the

future, it will be necessary to recur for a moment to the practice of the past. At the county conventions, a considerable portion of the day has usually been spent in discussing such topics as were deemed most intimately connected with the welfare of the schools in the section of country where the meetings were respectively held. All persons present have been invited to participate in the proceedings. Questions have been freely put, and replies given. On these occasions, I have always been requested to deliver an address in the course of the day, and have never felt at liberty to decline the invitation. I have also invariably held myself ready to answer such inquiries, and to meet such suggestions, as might be proposed; but the friends of education, assembled from the vicinity, have invariably been consulted as to the topics for discussion, and through the medium of a committee have generally proposed them. Out of a general similarity of circumstances and of objects has naturally arisen a considerable degree of uniformity in the modes of proceeding; and it is with the sincerest pleasure that I bear witness that, at all times, and in all places, the greatest harmony has prevailed. I do not mean that opinions have always coincided, but that different views have been presented in an amicable spirit; and it has oftentimes happened that some modified course, some third measure, has been elicited, better than either of those originally suggested.

Such has been the common mode of proceeding, the advantages of which have been clearly discoverable in regard to those towns and districts which have been most regularly and fully represented at the meetings. In regard to a considerable number of towns, an entire reform in their schools has been distinctly traceable to the fact, that a few of their most worthy and influential inhabitants had been present at one of these conventions; and, having listened to the counsels, or been inspired by the zeal of their fellow-citizens from other towns, have returned home to diffuse the information they had obtained, and to animate others with the spirit they had caught.

But the benefits of this course are too limited. It has served the purpose of exciting an interest, but it will not consummate the work of reform. Except in some half dozen or dozen cases, the conventions have lasted but a single day. Persons coming from any considerable distance, desire to leave at an early hour, that they may return home; and, as some time is necessarily spent in organization and in preliminary arrangements, the day is shortened at both ends. Unlike most other conventions, too, these are attended by ladies, whose paramount influence in the cause of education renders their presence exceedingly desirable; and this is another reason for dissolving the meetings at an early hour. In addition to this, most of the counties are too large, in point of territory, to allow persons, whose residence is remote from the respective places of meeting, to go and return on the same day; although, in some of the counties whose territory is greatest, there are individuals who have never failed of being present at them. It may be said, indeed, that other conventions, abolitional or political, are attended by persons who traverse half the length of the State for the purpose; that they are continued for two or more days; or, if held but for one, that the meeting is prolonged by borrowing many hours from the night. But, as an answer to this, it must be remembered that the cause of education,—the cause of ransoming our own children from

the bondage of ignorance and vice,—the cause which is not merely to affect, but to control their destiny, and that of the republic, through all future time,—has not yet aroused that degree of enthusiasm which will gather crowds of people from distant places, and hold them together for days in succession, while they descant upon their own virtues, and denounce the wickedness of their opponents.

But the best minds in our community have been reached. What is now wanted is, to reach another class of persons, numerically greater, but having less appreciation of the value of education, and less knowledge of the means by which it should be conducted. This class of persons do not attend the county conventions, either from a lack of interest in the general subject; or because the distance is too great; or because the conventions are held in the daytime, which they appropriate to labor. But many of this class would attend such a meeting in their own town, especially if held in the evening. What seems to be desirable now is, more frequent meetings in smaller sections of territory, that sounder views and a livelier interest may be carried to the doors of those who will not go abroad to obtain them. Such has been the course pursued from the beginning, in Connecticut, whose laws on the subject have been, in many respects, very similar to our own.

Another fact, having a strong bearing upon the question, is, that the several counties differ so much in size and population, that a provision for one public meeting in each county, each year, though in form equal, is in reality most unequal. In one county there are forty-six towns, in another fifty-five; while in one there are but three, and in Nantucket the limits of the town and county are coincident. In the two former, the population is about one hundred thousand each, while, in one of the latter, it is less than ten thousand, and in the other, less than four thousand. I have endeavored, as far as possible, to meet this difference, by holding, in some of the larger and less favorably situated counties, more meetings than the law requires; but I feel constrained to express the opinion that health and strength will fail any incumbent of the office I fill, who, in addition to its legal duties, shall undertake many supernumerary labors.

Again,—as it will be the object of a part of this Report to show,—very striking contrasts exist between the different counties and towns in the State, in respect to the condition of their schools, the amount of funds appropriated for their support, and the superintendence and encouragement bestowed upon them. Those towns and counties, where the insensibility to the claims of this cause is the most profound, need the most strenuous and persevering application of means to rouse them from their lethargy, and to render them painfully alive to that inferiority of privileges under which their children are suffering,—an inferiority which is now unobserved, but which, as soon as these children enter upon the stage of life, will be revealed by a manifestation of inferiority in attainments, in power, and in all the elements of respectability and usefulness.

Although, therefore, the system of annual county meetings seems clearly the best that could have been devised, for the past, yet, for the future, it seems equally clear that such a modification of the law as would provide for meetings to be held more frequently, and for smaller sections of territory, and distributed over the State more according to

the population and the differing wants of different sections, would now yield superior advantages. As the grand features of the cause have, within the last few years, been brought out by discussions, addresses, and the circulation of documents, the public mind is prepared to enter upon a more particular and detailed examination of those constituent parts, all of which must be correctly understood and wisely arranged, before the system will work with ease and energy. This object will require a longer time for its accomplishment, and will be less perfectly effected under the present arrangement, than under the one here proposed.

SCHOOL RETURNS AND REPORTS.

Although the reports of the school committees, for the past year, were more voluminous than for the preceding, yet, for reasons stated in the brief prefatory notice prefixed to the last abstract, the proportion of selections made from them was far less than before. It seems proper, therefore, to give a short summary of some important facts and views which are contained in the reports themselves, but which do not appear in the abstract, on account of the brevity of the selections made for it. With these, some considerations drawn from the statistical returns, will, almost necessarily, be mingled.

SCHOOL DISTRICTS.

The reports of the committees show that the true principles on which school districts should be formed, are now much better understood than formerly. A check has been given to the self-destructive practice of dividing and subdividing territory in order to bring the school near to every man's door. Our school districts are already so numerous, that just in the direct ratio in which the number is increased, is the value of our school system diminished. There is but one class of persons in the whole community,—and that class not only small in number, but the least entitled to favor,—who are beneficially interested in the establishment of small and feeble districts. This class consists of the very poorest teachers in the State, or of those who immigrate here from other states or countries, in quest of employment as teachers,—who are willing to teach for the lowest compensation,—and for whose services even the lowest is too high. These teachers may safely look upon the small and feeble districts as estates in expectancy. Such districts, having destroyed their resources by dividing them, must remain stationary from year to year, amidst surrounding improvement; and hence, being unable to command more valuable services, they will be compelled to grant a small annual pension to ignorance and imbecility; and this class of teachers stand ready to be their pensionaries.

SCHOOLHOUSES.

In preparing the abstract, I have made but very few and brief selections from the committees' reports, on the subject of schoolhouses. It is proper, therefore, to say, that the reports were characterized by a fulness and an emphasis on this topic, which they have never before exhibited. The closeness of the relation which a schoolhouse, well planned, situated, built, and furnished, bears to order, good manners, intellectual proficiency, and the culture of the social and even the moral sentiments of the pupils, as well as to the character of the dis-

trict where it is situated, has not, in any previous year, been so vividly and earnestly presented;—and, on the other hand, the loss, mischief, disease, disgrace, of a mean schoolhouse, have never been illustrated by so copious a reference to facts, or enforced by such an array of argument, and by such earnestness of expostulation and pungency of ridicule. In the committees' descriptions of bad schoolhouses may be found, in about equal proportions, most abundant materials both for tragedy and comedy.

In fine, a knowledge of the great truth is more extensively diffused and acted upon, that the Creator has established LAWS in regard to our physical as well as in regard to our moral nature; that he annexes the enjoyment of health, strength, and length of days to their observance, but punishes their violation with pain, sickness, and premature death; that he has made no revelation in regard to the physical laws, but has left us to discover and obey them, and to receive our reward; or, at our option, but at our peril, to remain in ignorance and disobedience, and incur their certain retributions. A strained and uncomfortable posture long enforced; sudden transitions from one extreme of temperature to another, or excessive heat at the head, while the feet are benumbed with cold; a strong light striking directly into the eye, while the book or paper is thrown into shade; and the breathing of noxious air, are offences against the wise and benign laws of nature, which never escape with impunity. Though committed in ignorance, nay, though enforced by parental authority upon thoughtless and inexperienced childhood, they must be expiated by suffering; for they belong to that extensive class of "iniquities," which, when committed by the "fathers," are "visited upon the children unto the third and fourth generation." It is to be earnestly hoped that the school committees will persevere in the laudable practice they have so well begun, until there shall not remain a town in the State which boasts, upon paper, of its temples to science, but has nought to show for them, in reality, but receptacles for penal confinement, and houses, not for the cure, but for the propagation, of disease.

During the last year, the city of Salem, and the village of Cabotville, in Springfield, have given the best specimens of schoolhouse architecture. Salem has erected several new schoolhouses, remodelled others, and put the residue in a condition of good repair. In Cabotville, the wise step was first taken of uniting two contiguous districts. The united district is erecting, and has almost completed, a beautiful house, far superior to any other in all the middle or western part of the State. Its cost is estimated at ten thousand dollars. As great attention has been paid to the model of these edifices, I deem it useful to give a plan of them at the close of this Report. The plan of the house for the high school at Lowell, which has lately gone into operation, is also given, as it is different from both the others, and is very well devised.* Our ingenious mechanics and architects can select any one of them as a model, or they may attempt a combination which will be an improvement upon all. These and several others, erected during the last year, are ornaments to the respective places of their location, an honor to their inhabitants, and a pledge of the elevated character of their posterity.

* For the plans here referred to, see the fifth number of the present volume of the Common School Journal, pp. 69—77.

APPROPRIATIONS OF MONEY BY THE TOWNS.

The appropriations by the towns continue to increase. Every year, also, less and less of the money granted, is diverted from its legitimate objects, (viz., the payments for the wages and board of teachers, and fuel for the schools,) to defray expenses for school furniture, for repairs of the schoolhouse, and, in some cases, to pay the rent of a room for the school. These cases of an unlawful diversion of the town's money have heretofore been very frequent; but such misapplications are now generally regarded in their true character, as little less than an embezzlement of funds provided for one of the most sacred of objects. In proportion as these illegal practices cease, the actual increase of the sum expended for the schools, exceeds that which is shown by the statistical tables.

AMOUNT AND REGULARITY OF ATTENDANCE.

The improvement of the last year upon the preceding, in regard to the amount and regularity of attendance, is very striking.

After deducting the scholars under four, and over sixteen years of age, from the whole number who attended school, both for the year 1839-40, and the year 1840-41, (those under four from the summer, and those over sixteen from the winter schools,) the increase of attendance for the last, over the preceding year, was, for summer, seven thousand four hundred and twenty-eight; and for winter, eight thousand six hundred and twenty-one. Making all due allowance for the increase in the number of children, there will still remain the most gratifying evidence of improvement in the amount of attendance. It will thus be seen that a most important inroad has been made upon the pernicious practices of absence and irregularity. Some differences, of course, will be occasioned in the amount of attendance, from year to year, by the open or blocked-up condition of the roads, or by the greater or less prevalence of epidemics; and, in these respects, the last winter had some advantage over the preceding; but this great and most encouraging difference is mainly attributable to two causes,—first, to the exertions of the friends of education in diffusing a knowledge of the evils of irregular attendance; and secondly, to the improved condition of the schoolhouses, by virtue of which, a less amount of colds and coughs, of temporary indisposition or of permanent disease, was inflicted upon the children.

It is most earnestly to be hoped, and, indeed, it is confidently to be expected, that when the committees and other friends of the cause shall see with what a substantial reward their generous efforts to secure a better attendance upon the schools have been crowned, they will be animated to renewed exertions for the more full accomplishment of the same end. It is almost incredible how great an evil yet remains to be overcome. To any one who at all comprehends the relation, as one of cause and effect, which a good Common School education bears to the welfare of the individual and the happiness of the community, the meager and scanty portion of that education which many of our children now obtain, in consequence of neglecting the means provided for them, is most appalling.

If the number of children under four years of age, who attended school during the last year, be deducted from the average of attendance in

summer, and the number of those over sixteen years of age, who attended school, be also deducted from the average of attendance in winter, the average attendance of those between four and sixteen years of age, will stand thus:—

For summer,	89,069
“ winter,	107,276

Now, allowing twelve thousand as the number of children in the State, who derive their whole education from academies and private schools, and who, therefore, are not dependent upon the Common Schools at all; and deducting this number from the number of children in the State, who are between the ages of four and sixteen years, (thus, $184,392 - 12,000 = 172,392$,) and the proportion of those who attended the Common Schools in summer, compared with the whole number dependent upon those schools, is as 89,069 to 172,392, or a very little more than one half; and the proportion of those who attended the same schools, in winter, as compared with the whole number dependent upon them, is as 107,276 to 172,392, or considerably less than eleven seventeenths.

Hence it appears that the amount of absence of those supposed to be dependent upon the Common Schools, was equivalent,—

For summer, to	83,323
“ winter, to	65,116

Supposing this enormous privation, instead of being spread over the whole State, and being lost to the sight of men by its diffusion and by its commonness, had fallen exclusively upon a single section;—supposing that a single portion of the territory of the Commonwealth had been selected and doomed to bear the entire loss,—in that case, the absence, even in winter, when it was more than eighteen thousand less than in summer, would have exceeded the number of all the children between four and sixteen years of age, in the five western counties of Berkshire, Hampshire, Hampden, Franklin, and Worcester. It would have exceeded, by more than ten thousand, all the children between four and sixteen years of age, in the six south-eastern counties of Norfolk, Bristol, Plymouth, Barnstable, Dukes county and Nantucket; and it would have been nearly equal to all the children, between the same ages, in the three great counties of Suffolk, Essex, and Middlesex;—the amount of absence in the summer, indeed, would have exceeded the number of children in the three last-named counties, by more than sixteen thousand. Were all the children in either of these three great sections of the Commonwealth wholly deprived of the privileges of a Common School education, would not the State,—foreseeing the inevitable calamities which, in the immutable order of events, must result from rearing so large a portion of its population in ignorance,—be filled with alarm, and impelled by the instinct of self-preservation, to seek for an antidote? But is the evil which this fact infallibly prophesies, any less dangerous or imminent, because, instead of shrouding one particular section of the Commonwealth in night, it is diffused over the entire surface of the State, darkening the common atmosphere, and blinding the vision of the whole people?

It is the simple instrument of the school register by which these

alarming facts have been detected and exposed. I am happy to find, both from personal communications and correspondence, and from the frequent references made to it in the school committees' reports, that the value of the register is now almost universally seen and acknowledged; and that those who, through shortsightedness or perversity, opposed its introduction, are now satisfied, or, at least, silenced, by the beneficial results to which it has led. Here and there, indeed, complaint is still made by the committees, of some slothful or stupid teacher who has too little fidelity to deliver over or transmit the register to them at the close of the term, or too little skill to keep it in an intelligible manner. To prevent this delinquency, some towns have passed a vote that the teachers shall not be paid, until they have delivered over the registers to the committee.

LENGTH OF SCHOOLS.

The amount of increase in the length of the schools has been already stated. It is obvious that one of the tendencies of prolonging the school term is, to diminish the average of attendance; because, while parents and guardians are to be found who think they cannot afford to send their children during the whole even of a short term, they will be still more disinclined to send them during the whole of a long one. It is gratifying, therefore, to find that the length of the schools and the average of attendance are simultaneously increasing.

It will, of course, be understood that the average increase in the length of the schools, before referred to, does not mean that each school has been prolonged about three weeks since the year 1837. In some towns they have not been lengthened at all, and in others only a week or a fortnight has been added. A considerable part of the residue is made up by the establishment of what, in this State, are called *annual schools*, that is, schools which are kept continuously through the year, with only such short vacations as are customary in all schools. This class of annual schools, which is regularly increasing, has the merit of furnishing permanent employment for a larger number of those persons who desire to make the honorable office of teaching a profession for life. One of the greatest benefits of the annual school is, that it supersedes the necessity of a quarterly, or at most, a semi-annual change of teachers. Every husbandman knows the consequences of renting his farm, each successive year, to a new lessee,—each lessee, in succession, being interested to carry away as much from the premises, and to leave as little, as he can. Not expecting to occupy the farm the next year, all his plans are laid with reference to the profits of the present. The teacher hired for a single term, stands in a similar relation to his employers. After making all due allowances, therefore, for the higher motives which should animate the teacher of a school, as compared with the lessee of a farm, can we expect that the interests of a school district will flourish as they ought, under circumstances so analogous to those which would impoverish an estate?

UNIFORMITY OF SCHOOL BOOKS.

On this subject, although a reform is evidently begun, yet the complaints of the committees are nearly as loud, and their expostulations

as earnest, as heretofore. A clearer view of the mischievous effects of this unnecessary evil, causes a less degree of it to be equally deplored. In regard to most of the other defects in our school system, some increase of expense is often the ready reply to appeals for improvement; but, in regard to text-books, uniformity and economy go hand in hand, while the evil of diversity brings with it the evil of a wasteful expenditure.

The diversity of school books in the State, is also a serious inconvenience to teachers, and through them it reacts injuriously upon the schools. As a matter of fact, it will be found that but few teachers who keep school several successive years in as many different towns, supply themselves with the kinds of books used in their respective schools. They regard the expense as an insuperable obstacle, unless it is made up to them by an increase of their wages, and this the districts are unwilling to make. Hence, when the teachers enter the school, they are dependent upon their scholars for books. At the time of recitation, and when each pupil needs his own book, the teacher borrows one for his private use; or, what would generally be worse, he hears the recitation without one. Hence the scholars are not only deprived of their books when needed, but the teacher never prepares himself upon the lesson before hearing it. This previous preparation on the lessons every teacher ought to make, so that all questions arising upon them may be familiar to him, and so that he may adapt his questions to the capacities of the scholars, and not take the chance of putting the easiest questions to the most bright and forward scholars, and the hardest ones to the dullards. But it is impossible to trace out, into their innumerable ramifications, all the evils which arise from the present multiplicity of our school books.

In regard to the selection of books by committees, I have had occasion, during the last year, to notice a mistake or oversight which deserves to be mentioned. It consists in the selection of books, which, on important points, conflict with each other, and, therefore, leave teacher and pupil in doubt what course to pursue;—as, for instance, the selection of Webster's Dictionary, with Worcester's or Pierpont's Reading Books, where the rules for pronunciation contained in the former are so different from those of the latter.

TEACHERS.

While the condition of the school is but a reflection of the image of the teacher, his qualifications are too important to be passed over in silence. Many facts conspire to prove that, for a long period, the teachers of our schools have not been so well qualified for their duties, nor devoted themselves with so great a degree of fidelity, or under circumstances so favorable to success, as during the last school year. In many towns there has been a most earnest and importunate demand for those of satisfactory attainments and unexceptionable character. When presented as candidates, they have been subjected to a far more scrutinizing examination, both in regard to literary qualifications and to their credentials of fitness for the management of a school, than ever before. They have also received more counsel and aid from school committees, whose increased visitations to the schools have tended strongly to repress the spirit of insubordination and to substi-

tute diligence and good manners for idleness and mischief. In addition to this, I have conclusive reasons for believing that the teachers of the State, taken as a body, have never before exerted themselves so much to understand and to perform their duty, and to answer the rising demands of the community upon them. During the last year, I met, by invitation, several large bodies of teachers,—in one instance, not less than two hundred,—assembled together from a wide circle to interchange views, and to discuss subjects pertaining to their employment. Now, this increased demand of the public for higher qualifications, made known to teachers in no ambiguous manner; this coöperation and sympathy of the school committees; this advancement of teachers, as a body, to a point of elevation where they stand more conspicuously in the public eye; and, above all, the stronger desire on their own part to acquit themselves creditably, and to win the honor of having their schools well reported to the towns by the committees,—cannot have existed without producing effects most salutary and extensive. Yet, notwithstanding these truths, in no previous year has the voice of approval, emanating from the reports, been so frequently drowned in that of condemnation. In no previous year have the committees drawn the line of demarkation with such breadth and clearness, between teachers as they are, and teachers as they should be; nor ever before has there been any thing like the indignant and heartfelt remonstrance against the usurpation of a teacher's duties and responsibilities, by ignorance, and inaptitude, and self-conceit. The explanation of this is, not a greater severity or uncharitableness of judgment, on the part of committees, but a clearer perception of long-existing, but previously unrecognized wants. The demand for better qualifications has outstripped the supply. A demand for better teachers may arise almost instantaneously on a perception of the incompetency of existing ones. But the supply requires time and labor; for a good teacher cannot be prepared without delay, as a merchant or manufacturer fills an order for goods. Even Adam Smith excepts education from the mercantile or economical law, that the supply will follow and equal the demand. "In every age, even among the heathen," says Martin Luther, "the necessity has been felt of having good schoolmasters, in order to make any thing respectable of a nation. But surely we are not to sit still, and wait until they grow up of themselves. We can neither chop them out of wood, nor hew them out of stone. God will work no miracles to furnish that which we have means to provide. We must, therefore, apply our care and money to train up and make them." In accordance with this idea, it seems to me that justice and equity towards teachers demand that the tone of condemnation should not rise to a higher pitch, until opportunities and inducements shall have been offered to them for better preparation; and that every friend of education, who insists upon qualifications superior to the present, is bound to do his part towards furnishing facilities and encouragements by which they can be acquired. We cannot consistently denounce a state of things which we do nothing to improve.

EXAMINATION OF TEACHERS.

In treating of the subject of teachers, the remark is not infrequently made by the committees, that the law exacts of them a duty impossible

to be fulfilled. They acknowledge that they can determine the literary qualifications of a candidate; but they aver that they have no means of ascertaining his moral worth, his ability to communicate what he knows, or the soundness of his judgment and discretion in the general management of a school. That there is some apparent justness in this defensive allegation, I would not deny; but I beg leave most respectfully to inquire whether it is not set forth much too broadly. In other words, are there not certain tests or criteria which the committee may adopt, and which would, at least in the great majority of cases, save them from imposition and the mortification of having given an undeserved approval. If the law really commands impossibilities, it should be repealed; if it does not, its requisitions are too important to be practically annulled. The language of the statute is, "The school committee shall require full and satisfactory evidence of the good moral character of all instructors who may be employed in the public schools in their town; and shall ascertain, by personal examination, their literary qualifications and capacity for the government of schools." [R. S. ch. 23, § 13.]

MODE OF ASCERTAINING THE MORAL CHARACTER OF CANDIDATES.

Here, *moral character* is made a first and indispensable condition of approval. In cases where the candidate is a neighbor or a townsman, his moral character will, of course, be known to the committee. If he comes from a distance, they must ordinarily rely on his credentials; but it is still within their province to decide upon the sufficiency of those credentials, both as to the fulness of their import, and their authenticity or the trustworthiness of the individuals whose signatures they bear. Here, it is worthy of their consideration, why so many of our teachers go to a great distance from home to keep school. In very many instances, towns which are fifty or a hundred miles apart, seem to have exchanged teachers. When a candidate, with glowing recommendations, comes from another State, or from a distant part of our own, in quest of a school, the inquiry very naturally arises, why his distinguished services were not in demand nearer home. Sometimes, indeed, there exist good reasons to lead a person abroad from the town of his nativity or residence; and such reasons, it is always to be supposed, will rebut the adverse presumption, which so naturally arises when a man who aspires to the moral dignity of a teacher is found itinerating through the country, like a pedler, to dispose of his services;—and this, too, (as, in some instances, has actually happened,) after examining the School Abstracts, to learn in what towns he would be most likely to find purchasers, indifferent to the quality of his wares.

In regard to the testimonials presented, I would suggest the propriety of the committees' entering in their book of records the names of all persons who have signed a certificate of good moral character in behalf of any candidate. The law requires each school committee to keep a book of records; and in this book, the names of all the candidates they approve, are, or should be, entered. With these, they might also enter the names of all persons who have vouched for their character; and should the committee, after such fidelity of examination, on this point, as a prudent and discreet man would exercise in regard to his own personal interests, find that they have been deceived, they

can then exculpate themselves before the town, by reporting the facts and exposing the names of those individuals by whose recommendations, whether fraudulent or heedless, (and, in such a case, heedlessness differs little from fraud,) they have been innocently misled.

MODE OF ASCERTAINING THE LITERARY QUALIFICATIONS OF CANDIDATES,
AND THEIR ABILITY TO INSTRUCT.

The next requisite mentioned in the statute, respects the *literary qualifications* of the candidate, and his *capacity for the government of a school*. Here, although the committees concede that they have the means of determining how well the candidate can spell or read, and how much knowledge of grammar, arithmetic, or geography, he possesses, by propounding questions or exercises on these several subjects, yet they aver that they can apply no gauge for measuring the capacity of the channel through which these attainments may flow out to fertilize the field of his labors. And again, it is said by the committees that it is impracticable for them to do any thing more than form a general conjecture of the candidate's capacity for government;—that is, his power of determining, at what times, under what circumstances, what amount of, and in what manner, assistance, encouragement, or reproof, should be administered to his pupils. Hence, while it is granted, on all hands, that the ability to impart knowledge, and the power of managing and governing a school, are as important as scholarship itself;—nay, that without the two former qualities, the latter is rendered nugatory,—it is maintained that one only of the three requisites can be subjected to a test, while the other two must be left to conjecture or chance. Now, if this be so,—if two points are necessarily left in doubt, for one that is determined,—if the committee, after availing themselves of all aids, and performing their duty in the most faithful manner, have double the cause for fear that they have for hope; and, so far as an examination is relied upon as a security against incompetence, there are still two chances that their approved candidate will fail, for one that he will succeed,—then, indeed, both the committee and the public are placed, by the law, in a painful predicament. According to this view of the case, the former are obliged to certify to important facts without the means of knowledge, and the latter to rely upon a guaranty, when the chances that it will prove delusive are as two to one.

Before joining in these strictures upon the law, we ought to investigate the means by which it can be observed; because requisitions which aim at so salutary an object, ought not to be rescinded, unless their execution is impracticable.

In the first place, it is obvious that the ability to impart knowledge depends very much upon the modes adopted for the purpose. The greatest talent will be nearly frustrated, if subjected to the use of untoward or inadequate methods. All the vividness and coherence of knowledge are lost in the employment of obscure or circuitous media for its communication. Some of the profoundest and most useful sciences owe their perfection as much to the art which has prepared their instruments, as to the talent that has developed their principles; and the knowledge of a La Place or a Bowditch would have been almost unavailing without the aid of such workmen as Dolland and Fraunhofer. Every one conversant with schools must have observed

that a much less degree of skill, availing itself of the best methods and instruments, will accomplish more than a much greater degree, which is deprived of the appropriate means of elucidation. For instance, in regard to arithmetic and geography, nothing can supply the want of a black-board.

BLACK-BOARD.—It is next to impossible,—if, indeed, it is not wholly so,—to teach either arithmetic or geography thoroughly or rapidly without the use of a black-board; or,—which is of still greater importance,—to give the pupil those vivid and ingrained conceptions which will remain a part of the very substance of the mind, while life lasts, instead of such superficial impressions as will fade away by the end of the term. This cheap, simple, and most effective piece of apparatus, the black-board, which, a few years ago, was not known in our schools, is now deemed invaluable and indispensable by all the best teachers in the State. Now, can any thing be more easy, in the examination of a candidate, than to inquire whether he has the command of the black-board,—in what studies and in what manner he would use it? And should the candidate reply that he has never been accustomed to use it, for working out problems in arithmetic, for drawing maps in geography, for spelling, &c.; or that he has tried it, and then discarded it as valueless; can any thing be more certain than that such a candidate is destitute of aptness to teach, and unworthy of a certificate of approval?

So, in regard to the female candidate, who proposes to take charge of small children;—she, certainly, will fail to provide for them the most agreeable and instructive occupation,—she cannot give them one half the intellectual knowledge she might otherwise impart,—if she does not know how to use the black-board, in connection with the slate and pencil, for teaching the letters of the alphabet, and rules for sentence-making,—such as the mode of commencing paragraphs, the use of capitals, hyphens, pauses, &c.,—and for commencing to teach the invaluable art of drawing. A few inquiries, on this subject, would determine, to a great extent, the question of the candidate's aptness to teach.

When a visiter, on entering a schoolhouse, sees a black-board thrown aside into the wood-shed, or lumbering the entry, but finds none in the schoolroom, he may propose a short stay in that school, so far as the hope of seeing any thing instructive to himself, or creditable to the teacher, is concerned.

READING, &c.—Reading is a branch of study of such importance, that different modes of teaching it project a beneficial or a baneful influence over the whole future life, and raise or depress the grade of individual intelligence and capacity, into whatever sphere of action the young reader may be afterwards thrown. The metaphor would not one whit overstate the literal truth, were we to say that the teacher, in forming his pupils' habits of reading, encircles their heads with a bright and radiating light, or wraps around them a cloudy medium, which they will carry through life, to enlighten or obscure every object about them, wherever they may go. And is it not easy for the committee to inquire of the candidates, whether it is their invariable habit to search out, and to require the scholars to explain, the meaning of all

words not understood ; and, after every reading lesson is completed, to call upon the class for a synopsis or general statement, in their own language, of its contents ? If a teacher omits these practices, so far is he from being *apt* to teach reading, that he is apt, nay, certain, not to teach it ; but, day after day, to obliterate from the minds of his pupils both the capacity and the desire to master the noble instrument of language.

In regard, also, to the first requisite in the mechanical part of reading, viz., pronunciation, cannot the committee ask the candidate whether it is his invariable habit to have a *Pronouncing Dictionary* always at hand, to which, in all cases of doubt, he can immediately refer, not only to ascertain the true pronunciation of the words in our own language, but the true pronunciation of scriptural and of geographical proper names, and also of such Greek and Latin proper names as occur in the text-books ? The general rules for pronouncing English proper names differ widely from those by which the pronunciation of proper names, in other languages, whether ancient or modern, is determined ; and hence the pupil, in pronouncing the latter according to the analogy of the former, will commit frequent, and to an educated ear, very ridiculous mistakes. But a pupil will naturally follow the analogies of his native tongue, unless he is directed by another standard. What a misfortune to a child to be bred up in the imitation of an outlandish, brogue-like, or barbarous pronunciation, which, like some visible and offensive deformity of person, he will display wherever he goes ! or, if he becomes conscious of his vulgarity, and aspires to correct it, months and years of effort will hardly suffice for its eradication. These consequences depend upon the teacher ; for it is as easy for a child, at first, to learn right as to learn wrong pronunciation or articulation ; and how can a candidate be considered worthy of a certificate who overlooks so essential an item in the list of a teacher's qualifications ?

So, if a candidate answers affirmatively to the question, whether, in teaching arithmetic, he gives to his pupil, as a first lesson in this study, all those signs of multiplication, division, proportion, and of the square and cube root, which are found at the beginning of some of our school Arithmetics, he shows, by his very answer, his ignorance of one of the first and simplest rules by which a teacher should be guided, viz., not to teach barren signs, unaccompanied by ideas ; but to wait until, in the course of advancement, the pupil comes to the subject-matter to which each sign belongs, and then to give the sign which typifies or symbolizes it.

GEOGRAPHY.—In beginning to teach geography to young children, the lessons found at the commencement of our school books are not the ones which should come first in order. Space and form are the elements of physical geography, as time is of history ; and a child may as well be set to studying history, who has no idea that the world he lives in is older than his grandparents, as to studying our common text-books of geography before his mind has been led outward and outward into space, and has acquired definite ideas of the forms with which the surface of the earth is occupied. The localities about the schoolhouse, the roads or streets in the vicinity, with all the striking objects which char-

acterize them, should be the subjects of the first lessons in this important branch of study. These should be minutely described and delineated upon the black-board, before referring to any object beyond the visible horizon. An image of the brook which the child may have crossed in coming to school; of the pond in the neighborhood on whose margin he may have sported; of the hill to whose summit he may have climbed, should be distinctly pictured upon the mind, to be referred to as *units of measure*, when, in the course of his studies, he comes to rivers, and lakes, and mountains, a hundred or a thousand times wider, broader, or higher, than any he has ever seen. Before this preliminary step is taken, it is pernicious to require a pupil to commit to memory definitions of zenith and nadir, of latitude and longitude, and those other points, lines, and circles,—the mere creatures of abstraction,—which are used in elucidating the *Doctrine of the Sphere*.

In many books of geography, the natural features of the earth are treated of under the head of its civil or political divisions. The pupil, for instance, in learning the hydrography of the Mississippi valley, takes up the subject in fragments. He begins, perhaps, with the tiers of States on the eastern or left bank of the Mississippi; and in learning what are their respective climates, soils, productions, manners, laws, religion, &c., he learns, also, what particular branches or tributaries of that great river rise in, or flow through, each of those States. He then takes the States on the western or right bank, in their order. Thus, though every stream belonging to the "Father of Waters" is brought under his notice, yet his knowledge of them is disconnected; he has acquired it with long intervals between his lessons, and it is incoherent and mingled with a variety of other facts; for he must have spent considerable time, and have travelled over more than a dozen States to compass it. But suppose the teacher should lead the mind of the pupil at once to the mouth of the Mississippi, and then, in imagination, should soar with him to such an elevation above the surface of the earth, that the immense valley beneath could be surveyed by a single glance of the eye, bounded on the west by the grand wall of the Rocky Mountains, and on the east by that of the Alleghanies; the river itself presenting the likeness of a vast tree, its main channel forming a trunk thousands of miles in length, while its numerous tributaries represent branches of thousands of miles' expanse,—all seen as one object, and therefore having coherence, and giving vividness and depth of impression;—can any one doubt that a better knowledge of the hydrography of the Mississippi valley could, in this mode, be acquired in a single day, than most of our children now possess when they leave school, after the study of years? Again; let the single fact be pointed out to a pupil, that a man may travel from Gibraltar, in a north-easterly direction, to Russia and the Frozen Ocean, and not cross a river of any considerable size, though he would pass near the fountain-heads of all the great rivers in Europe; and it will give him a clearer and more lasting impression of the course of European rivers, of the system of European mountains, and of the general face and slopes of the country

[To be continued.]